

**Testimony on behalf of Thomas Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks
and Recreation in Simsbury, CT Before the Committee on Children
February 7, 2023**

House Bill 6574 - An Act Concerning Municipal Youth Camps

I thank the Committee on Children for their work to improve the safety and lives of the children in the great state of Connecticut. That being said, **I oppose House Bill 6574** as I believe it will **reduce the affordability** of municipal summer camp programs for working families **and does little to make these programs safer** for participants than they already are.

The requirements of being licensed (like private day care centers and private youth camps) would be incredibly burdensome for the Simsbury Culture, Parks and Recreation Department and community parks and recreation agencies across the state. It would be necessary for us to retain an APRN/Physician for the summer, hire additional office and camp staff to handle all of the required extra paperwork that would be needed to meet the licensing regulations. Families of program participants would be required to complete and return physician approved health forms (often at an additional cost to them) to complete enrollment, we would also be required to use the State Office of Early Childhood Background Check System at a cost of about \$88 per applicant. Additionally, we would have to have multiple staff members in different capacities over the age of 21. It is already very difficult to find qualified staff, of any age, as it is. Ultimately all of the increased costs will be passed onto the working families of our participants, as our department does not receive tax funding for programming, once again reducing the affordability of community parks and recreation programs. After 4 years of state mandated minimum wage increases our department has already increased fees significantly. In some situations, I can foresee us and other communities even pulling back on some summer programming, reducing the number of available slots for parents who are seeking affordable summer childcare for their children because the licensing requirements would be too burdensome.

I don't believe that House Bill 6574 does anything to improve safety at the typical municipal summer program. We already background check all staff members over 18, at a significantly lower cost than the State price. All of our staff members are trained in First Aid and CPR, state licensure requirements dictate there must be at least one First Aid Director, age 21 or over, on site at all times. All of our staff members annually receive DCF Mandated Reporter training and all of our Camp Directors and Assistant Directors are certified in Medication Administration. Our camp counselors go through many hours of staff training and all of our well-trained lifeguards are already Red Cross Certified and participate in weekly training sessions throughout the summer.

We make use of safe and well-maintained local school and town facilities for summer programs, we do not need to be inspected by OEC staff regularly to count the number of toilets available to campers and staff. Our summer programs are well supervised with an organized chain of command. Camp Counselors, Camp Directors, Program Coordinator, Parks and Recreation Director, HR Director and Risk Manager, as well as the Town Manager. This is much more oversight than what would be required under the OEC state license regulations.

Simsbury summer programming, Camp Stuff-Ta-Doo in particular, is a source of pride for the community. Generations of kids have enjoyed a safe, fun and enjoyable experience at a cost that could be managed by all Simsbury families. Increased pressure on fees from increases in minimum wage or

municipal camp licensing will reduce the number of children who will be able to take part in this positive childhood experience.

Thank you for consideration of this issue.

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